3: Low G-5 (1844-1847) 1848
OC6 Iban OC6

of the different villages combine to repair or rebuild them all at the same time, their houses and terraces have always an uniform appearance, and are all of the same size. In the interior arrangements of their houses the fire-places, of which there are two, are placed on each side of the principal entrance; each is formed of a kind of shallow box, or framework, of strong pieces of wood filled with clay; this is supported on strong wooden posts reaching through the flooring to the ground, and extending to the top of the house. On the clay are four or five stones of a convenient size, which serve for sustaining the cooking pot over the fire, which is placed in the space left between them, and is always of wood, a large supply of which, split and ready, is always kept dry on another framework above the fire-place, and supported by the same posts. This it is the duty of the women constantly to replenish from the trees which have been felled in clearing the ground, and which are strewed abundantly all over their farms. As the roofs are high in the centre, and slope at a sharp angle, much room in the top of the house is rendered available by the Dyaks, who erect another flooring over the one they constantly use; thus they have a large and useful loft where they stow their baskets, mats, and implements of agriculture during the season they are not in use. As may be supposed, people in their state of barbarity have little need of furniture, which for the most part is used to administer to the purposes of luxury.

5: Roth E-4 (no date) 1892 CC6 Iban OC6

out the smoke or to admit the fresh air. If the neighbours are near relations or intimate friends, as is often the case, a hole is cut in the wall which separates the room to avoid the necessity of a roundabout way into one anothers' apartments, and some villages are so arranged that one can traverse the entire length of the rear section of the building by means of these apertures without appearing on the verandah at all. There is no furniture in the room—none in fact being required. The floor is the occupiers' table and they squat to their meals. But there are plenty of mats to sit upon and baskets to pack their clothes in. Their cups and plates are hung in rows upon the walls as much for ornament as for use. Their valuables, such as old jars, gongs, etc., are ranged on three sides so as to present the most imposing appearance of wealth.

But the room is stuffy and untidy, and no wonder, seeing that there is but one for each family and this one is used as a kitchen as well as a mess room, as a nursery as well as a bed chamber. There can be no absolute privacy unless the door is barred to exclude the neighbours. Boys and girls keep running in and out and the dogs are always on the watch in the *tempuan* to spring in whenever the door swings open. The floor is swept after a fashion but the room is never deserted, and the roof is simply black with soot. The refuse is thrown into the piggery and poultry yard, which occupies the area or waste space under the house. Very little stench, if any, reaches the apartment from the ground, as the floor is raised too high above it to be affected by it. The *dapur* or fire-place is the only real piece of furniture in the room. It is built either to the right or to the left of the door set up against the wall of the *tempuan* and resembles an open cupboard, the lowest shelf resting upon the floor and the upper shelves being of lattice work instead of plank. The former is boarded all round and filled with clay. This is the fireplace and it is furnished with a few stones between which the pots are set. The shelf immediately above the fire is set apart for smoking fish and meat, etc. The shelves above this again are filled with firewood which being thoroughly dried is ready for use. The women, who do all the cooking, have also to keep these shelves supplied from the pile in the *tempuan*. As the smoke from the wood fire is not conducted to the roof by means of a chimney it spreads itself throughout the loft and blackens the beams and rafters until it finds its way out by the open window.[1]

[1] Elsewhere B. L. says: "They make a *palan* or raised platform and under it light a fire and heap it with dry twigs and fill the platform with split wood for drying as *bekal* (firewood). From the fire they take brands for other fires. They drive three pegs into the ground and place *prion* (jar) on top, fill

5: Roth E-4 (no date) 1892 CC6 Iban CC6

The *tempuan* or general thoroughfare is between the *bilieh* and the *ruai*. It is three feet in width and is paved with wood. It is furnished with a ladder or notched stick by which to reach the loft, a family mortar where the women pound their paddy with wooden pestles to free it from the husk, and a pile or two of firewood reared by the men for use inside. This passage is also used by the women to winnow their rice in, feed their dogs, and attend to their chickens, and by the men to wash the dirt off their feet when they come home from their work. The wall of the *tempuan* is sometimes elaborately painted in various patterns, and the spears of the family are thrust into the skirting board so as to be handy.

The *ruai* or verandah is in front of the *tempuan* and is as nearly as possible the same size as the *bilieh* from which it differs principally in being open on all sides and without any partition. It is therefore a cooler and more agreeable place and as such is frequented by both sexes for the purposes of conversation, discussion, and indoor pursuits. Female visitors are usually received in the *bilieh*, but male visitors are invariably received in the *ruai* and only enter the bilieh when invited to do so to be introduced to the women and to share the meals. They sleep in the *ruai* along with the boys and bachelors, and sit there all day when they have nothing better to do, conversing with the head of the family and chewing betel. The floor is carpeted with thick and heavy mats of cane interlaced with narrow strips of beaten bark. Over these are spread other mats of thinner and finer texture. There is a small fireplace between this and the next *ruai* for the men to warm themselves at when they get up, as they usually do, in the chill of the morning, before the sun has risen above the trees; the fire is allowed to go out in the middle of the day, but is revived towards the evening when it is getting dark, but still too early to light the torches.

Some *ruais* are provided with a *panggan* or bedstead with plank sides in one corner of the room for the men to sleep in, but this is not always the case. If the head of the family has made it for his own use and if he be a chief or rich man he will fix his gongs of various kinds around it for the sake of show; his weapons will be within reach and his war dress will hang from the roof where it can be seen to best advantage —a skull cap of wickerwork with its nodding plumes, and a skin jacket decorated with the tail feathers of the war bird of the tribe. But the most valuable ornament in the *ruai* by far is

quarter with rice and fill up with water and when it simmers cover it with leaves. Before the arrival of Europeans the Dyaks used earthen *prions* made by themselves."

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

number of families living in the house, and these range from three or four to forty or fifty.

Each family has its own portion of this *ruai*, and in each there is a small fireplace, which consists of a slab of stone, at which the men warm themselves, when they get up, as they usually do, in the chill of the early morning before the sun has risen.

Over this fireplace hangs the most valuable ornament in the eyes of the Dyak, the bunch of human heads. These are the heads obtained when on the warpath by various members of the family—dead and living—and are handed down from father to son as the most precious heirlooms—more precious, indeed, than the ancient jars which the Dyaks prize so highly.

The posts in this public covered veranda are often adorned with the horns of deer and the tusks of wild boars—trophies of the chase. The empty sheaths of swords are suspended on these horns or from wooden hooks, while the naked blades are placed in racks overhead.

On one side of this long public hall is a row of doors. Each of these leads into a separate room, or *bilik*, which is occupied by a family. The doors open outwards, and each is closed by means of a heavy weight secured to a thong fastened to the inside. If the room be unusually large, it may have two doors for the sake of convenience.

This room serves several purposes. It serves as a kitchen, and in one corner there is a fireplace where the food is cooked. This fireplace is set against the wall of the veranda, and resembles an open cupboard. The lowest shelf rests on the floor, and is boarded all round and filled with clay. This forms the fireplace, and is furnished with a few stones upon which the pots are set

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

342 for cooking. The shelf immediately above the fireplace
354 is set apart for smoking fish. The shelves above are filled with firewood, which is thoroughly dried by the smoke and ready for use. As the smoke from the wood fire is not conducted through the roof by any kind of chimney, it spreads itself through the loft, and blackens the beams and rafters of the roof.

342 This room also serves as a dining-room. When the
264 food is cooked, mats are spread here, and the inmates
352 squat on the floor to eat their meal. There is no furniture, the floor serving the double purpose of table and chairs.

342 This *bilik* also serves as a bedroom. At night the mats
513 for sleeping on are spread out here, and the mosquito-curtains hung up.

342 There is no window to let in the air and light, but a
354 portion of the roof is so constructed that it can be raised a foot or two, and kept open by means of a stick.

353 Round the three sides of this room are ranged the treasured valuables of the Dyaks—old jars, some of which
523 are of great value, and brass gongs, and guns. Their cups and plates are hung up in rows flat against the walls. The flooring is the same as that of the veranda, and is made of split palm or bamboo tied down with cane.
356 The floor is swept after a fashion, the refuse falling through the flooring to the ground underneath. But the room is stuffy, and not such a pleasant place as the
231 open veranda. The pigs and poultry occupy the waste space under the house.

342 From the *bilik* there is a ladder which leads to an upper
417 room, or loft (*sadau*), where they keep their tools and store their paddy. If the family be a large one, the
573 young unmarried girls sleep in this loft, the boys and young men sleeping outside in the veranda.

PART 1

THE IBAN BILEK-FAMILY.

1. The most salient characteristic of Iban social organization is the practice of long-house domicile. Anyone who has travelled in the interior of Borneo is familiar with the conspicuous shape of a long-house: an attenuated structure supported on innumerable hard-wood posts, it stretches for a hundred yards or more along the terraced bank of a river, its roof—of thatch, or wooden shingles—forming an unbroken expanse. Superficially viewed the Iban long-house has the appearance of being a single structural unit, and many casual observers have made the facile inference that the long-house is therefore the outcome of some sort of communal or group organization and ownership.(1) For the Iban, at least, this inference is the very reverse of true. Among the various families which make up a long-house community there does exist a network of kinship ties, but the Iban long-house is primarily an aggregation of independently owned family apartments. The fact that these apartments are joined one to the other as to produce a long-house detracts little from their essential autonomy. Indeed the unbroken expanse of roof tends to conceal the fact that the Iban long-house is fundamentally a series of discrete entities—the independent family units of a competitive and egalitarian society.

2. A long-house, then, is made up of a series of independently owned family apartments which are joined longitudinally one to the other so as to produce a single attenuated structure. Long-houses do, however, vary very considerably in size: from houses of three or four family apartments and scarcely over a chain in length, to houses that sprawl for more than three hundred yards along the bank of a river and contain upwards of forty different family sections. But before discussing in detail the overall composition of the long-house, let us first turn to a brief examination of the distinct sections or apartments from which every long-house is constructed. Each of these apartments is owned and occupied by a particular family group, and these family groups are the basic corporate units of Iban society. The principal divisions of a family apartment are:

(*a*) the *bilek*, or living room,
(*b*) the *sadau*, or loft,
(*c*) the *ruai*, or roofed gallery,
(*d*) *tanju*, or open platform.

All of these are shown in Fig. 1.

The bilek.

3. Of these four parts the most important is the *bilek*, which is the family living room, and the place where the valued property of the family is stored. Each *bilek* is divided off from the *ruai* by a substantial wall of wooden planks, and side walls separate each *bilek* from the rooms on either side of it. Each *bilek* has one main entrance on to the *ruai*, with a hinged door of wooden slabs that is normally kept closed. At night it is usual for these doors to be barred from the inside. It is also fairly common for the side walls of a *bilek* to be broken by smaller doors or openings, so providing inter-communication between the family apartments of the long-house. But this practice is far from universal; internal doors or openings are only found if the neighbouring families are closely related (e.g. siblings or close cousins), or if they are on particularly friendly terms with one another. On several occasions I witnessed the blocking up of these internal openings following a dispute and quarrelling between neighbouring families. The *bilek* of a long-house is always very slightly in size, and the width of the wall facing on to the *ruai* is some indication of the economic status of the family that owns it. In Rumah Nyala, of the Sungai Set, the smallest *bilek* was 12ft. 6ins. wide by 16ft. deep, while the largest was 23ft. wide by 17ft. 6ins. deep. The larger *bilek* of Rumah Tungku—a fifty door long-house of the Sungai Tiau—measured 25ft. wide by 24ft. deep.

4. The *bilek* is the normal location for cooking, eating, sleeping and a multitude of domestic tasks. Each *bilek* is equipped with its own cooking place, or *dapur*, which traditionally is situated at the front of the *bilek* against the dividing wall with the *ruai*. It consists of a rough scaffolding of wood which supports a raised hearth of packed clay, and some feet above, a wide rack on which fire wood is stacked ready for use. At this hearth the women boil rice—the staple food of the Iban—and prepare the relishes which accompany it. In the ordinary course of events, all the members of family—men, women, and children—eat together in their *bilek*, squatting in a circle around the meal which has been laid out in the centre of the room. At nights, finely plaited mats are spread, mosquito curtains suspended, and the *bilek* becomes the sleeping place of all but the young unmarried men, who more often favour the open gallery, or *ruai* of the long-house. At the back of the *bilek*, and frequently along both its sides, are stacked the huge jars (*tajau*) and bronze gongs (*tawak*) which constitute the main capital resources of a family, and its chief form of inheritable property. Kept carefully packed away in wooden trunks, or securely wrapped in bark-cloth are the hand-woven fabrics (*pua kumbo* and *kain kebat*), used only on ritual and gala occasions, which are another of the important indications of the wealth and status of an Iban family. Ranged in racks around the walls are plates and bowls, and an extraodinary medley of minor possessions.

The sadau.

5. Above each *bilek*, and jutting out over the *ruai*, is the *sadau*, which is a kind of garret or loft. Here, in immense bark bins, is stored the *padi* grown by the members of the *bilek*. A series of smaller containers hold the carefully selected seed (each family possesses many different types of *padi*), to be used at the next sowing. Most important of all these is the seed of the *padi pun*—

(1) Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, 1909, p. 27.

342 a singular variety of inherited rice—which is the centre of the elaborate fertility cult upon which
251 Iban agriculture is based. Also in the *sadau* are kept the various implements used in farming, and the mats, baskets and trays used when *padi* is being husked and winnowed.

The ruai.

342 6. The door of each family *bilek* opens on to another section known as the *ruai*, which is always of about the same area as the *bilek*, and which—like the *bilek*—is the private property of the family to which it belongs. In an Iban house of traditional design, the division between the *bilek* and the *ruai* is marked by the main supporting post (*tiang bumbong*) of the ridge-pole; thus the rear half of the ridged roof covers the *bilek* while the front half covers the *ruai*. Unlike the *bilek*, a family's *ruai* has no side walls, so that all these independently owned sections are joined to produce a continuous, roofed gallery, which runs the entire length of the long-house. Throughout its length the *ruai* maintains a fairly constant width. In Rumah Nyala, for example, the average width of the *ruai* was about 23ft., while in Rumah Tungku it was 25ft. The *ruai* serves many purposes. Three principal parts may be distinguished. Immediately adjacent to the wall dividing the *bilek* from the *ruai*, is a section about three to four feet in width, known as the *tempuan lesong*.
252 Here stands the *lesong*, a large wooden mortar, in which the women of the family pound their *padi* with long hard-wood poles, so to husk it. Most of these *padi* mortars are fitted with sounding boards which, vibrating in time to the pounding poles, send a lively, staccato rhythm reverberating through the surrounding hills. Here also, in the *tempuan lesong*, firewood is stacked, and fighting cocks are tethered.

343 7. Adjoining this narrow strip comes another section, usually about 10 to 12 feet in width, and completely unobstructed by posts or partitions; it thus forms a common corridor giving access to all parts of the long-house. It is, in fact, a kind of village street, and except on ritual occasions when a family may cordon off its own particular portion, it is used by all the members of the community as a kind of general thoroughfare. The flooring of this corridor section is usually made from bamboo slats, which are springy to the tread. The *ruai* also serves many other purposes in addition to those of a street. It is the site of many domestic occupations; it is here, for example, that women suspend the frames on which to process their cotton (*nyikat ubong*), and later, set up their weaving looms. When religious rituals (*gawai*) are held, the *ruai* is the place where the all-important shrines (*runyai*) are erected, and it is also the pathway for ceremonial processions (*niti daun* and *ngerandang*), and the invocation of the gods (*timang*). Here too, the spirit mediums (*manang*) perform their principal rites, and here the bodies of the dead are laid during the period of public mourning and ritual wailing which precedes burial.

8. One side of this corridor or 'street' is flanked by the entrances to the various *bilek*, or family rooms, and on the other it is skirted by a series of open spaces which extend to a low wall right under the eaves of the long-house roof. Each family possesses one of these open rectangular spaces, known as *padong ruai*. Varying in width in accordance with the *bilek* of which it is an extension, but always having a regular depth—usually about eight to ten feet—the *padong ruai* is one of the most important parts of the long-house. Floored with adzed, wooden planks, and furnished with huge *rotan* mats, it is the place where the people of the house, and particularly the men, spend most of their leisure time. The various *padong ruai* of a long-house are the main centres of community life and social intercourse. Here meetings (*baum*) are held, and disputes formally heard and settled. Here guests are welcomed with tobacco and betel, and offerings to the gods preformed. The cool and convivial *ruai* is also the site for many minor tasks: the place where nets are knotted, knife handles and sheaths carved, mats plaited, and cotton tied ready for
[321] dyeing. At nights it is the place where the men gather in informal groups to talk about their *padi* farms (a perennial topic of conversation), to discuss an omen or a dream, or merely to gossip, avidly and aimlessly. It is on the *ruai* too, and in the evenings, that the enthralling sagas (*enaera*)
[638] of the Iban are chanted and recited—sagas which tell of the fantastic adventures and miraculous
[673] feats of their culture heroes, the Orang Panggau. By young and unmarried men, the *padong ruai* is commonly used—despite the prowling dogs—as a sleeping place, and sometimes they construct for themselves, at the very edge of the *ruai*, and under the eaves of the roof, special bunk-like en-
[778] closures, termed *agu*. The line between the corridor and the *padong ruai* is marked by a row of secondary supporting posts, which also stand at the edge of the projecting *sadau*, or loft. Close to these posts, and in tangled, smoke-blackened clusters, hang the highly prized heads, or *antu pala*,
[354] with which so many of the most cherished values and beliefs of the Iban are associated. Beneath each such cluster of heads is a hearth (*bediang*) of stone or clay, on which fires are kindled—both on chilly nights, and during certain head-hunting rituals. It is important to note that these heads (*antu pala*) are always the property of one particular family, and are never owned by the long-house group as a whole.

9. Like the *bilek*, of which it is an extension, each section of the *ruai* (composed of the
123 three divisions just described) is owned by a particular family. It is the duty of each family to keep
342 its section of the corridor or long-house 'street' in good repair so that all may use it. But this general use involves no diminution of ownership rights; each family retains the right to cordon off its section of the *ruai* during the performance of certain rituals, and on other occasions to insist (on the pain of fine) that prohibitions governing its use be fully observed by all members of the long-house community. The boundaries of each family section of the *ruai* are clearly marked by the main supporting posts of the long-house structure, but quite often dwarf walls (12 to 18 inches in height) are erected on the *padong ruai*. These plank partitions, which make convenient back rests, further demarcate the various family sections.

The tanju.

342 10. Beyond the *ruai*, and so not covered by any form of roof, is the *tanju*, an open platform, usually about 20 to 25 feet wide. As with the corridor of the *ruai*, all the independently owned sections of the *tanju* are joined to form an unbroken, raised platform, which fronts the whole